

BOOK REVIEWS

THE WESTERN JOURNAL OF MEDICINE does not review all books sent to it by the publishers. A list of new books received is carried in the Advertising Section.

MALIGNANT MELANOMA OF THE SKIN AND MUCOUS MEMBRANE—G. W. Milton, MBBS(Adel), FRCS, FRACS, Professor of Surgery, University of Sydney, Director of the Melanoma Unit, Sydney Hospital, Honorary Surgeon, Sydney Hospital; Visiting Professor in Surgery, Liverpool District Hospital; With chapters by V. J. McGovern, MD(NZ), FRACP, FRCPath, FRCPA, Director, Fairfax Institute of Pathology, Royal Prince Alfred Hospital; Lecturer in Pathology, University of Sydney; and Martin G. Lewis, MD, MRC, Path(London), Director, Cancer Research Unit, McIntyre Medical Sciences Building, Montreal, with the assistance of Geoffrey Rowden and Terrence M. Phillips, McGill University Cancer Research Unit, McIntyre Medical Sciences Building, Montreal. Churchill Livingstone—Medical Division of Longman Inc., 19 West 44th St., New York City (10036), 1977. 174 pages, \$29.00.

This is a timely book, relating in great detail the authors' experiences with malignant melanoma at the Melanoma Unit in the Sydney Hospital, the University of Sydney, and the Queensland Melanoma Project in Australia, as well as the McGill University Cancer Research Unit in Canada. Nowhere in the world is the incidence of melanoma any higher than in the patient population observed by the authors, and their report and extensive review of the literature should command great respect.

The book is largely based on the authors' personal experience. The first chapter, on the etiology and pathology of melanoma, written by Dr. V. J. McGovern—whose extensive experience with melanoma is internationally recognized—includes a very complete and concise up-to-date review of the pertinent world literature on the subject. Dr. McGovern interprets the currently available information and adds his own personal experience. Of interest is his view that "most melanomas develop in pre-existent naevi." The published experience in the United States somewhat disputes this concept and advocates that melanomas arise any place where there are melanocytic cells, including nevi. Dr. McGovern proposes that melanomas commencing in nevi usually represent superficial spreading type of melanomas, which in turn are the most common form of the disease.

Possible etiologic factors in melanoma, including the relationship to sunlight, host susceptibility, familial and hormonal aspects, as well as other recently proposed contributing conditions, are discussed.

The importance of histologic grading of melanoma is emphasized, based on three grades of mitotic activity, as proposed by the International Group of Pathologists. Emphasis is also placed on the proper correlation of the microscopic and clinical data, including level of invasion, thickness (as proposed by Breslow), mitotic activity (nuclear grading), cellular response, sex, age and other known factors.

The chapters on clinical and differential diagnosis, biopsy, and treatment reflect Dr. Milton's experience. They tend to be repetitious, but well discussed, presenting many very fine details and clues not generally mentioned elsewhere in the literature. Unfortunately, the clinical photographic pictures appear too small, and the legends too long. In addition, they are arranged in a manner that somewhat detracts from the otherwise excellent presentation. His approach to biopsy and surgical treatment is dictated by logic and common sense. He supports the concept that a partial biopsy may not increase the risk of spread, and outlines indications or guidelines for partial incisional biopsies. The very fine and detailed descriptions of definitive therapeutic surgical procedures for the various forms and locations of

melanomas should be of interest to all surgeons treating this disease. Accounts of many years of personal experience in the surgical management of melanoma, and critical analysis of published procedures, will be welcomed reading by anyone involved in its management, or personally confronted with this diagnosis. Besides describing the surgical procedure of choice in their hands, the preoperative and postoperative management, and the surgical complications are discussed, devoting complete chapters to problem areas, according to the location of the lesion. The survival data presented are meaningful but somewhat confusing.

The chapters dealing with spontaneous regression, metastases and management of metastases should be regarded as classics. The author also relates his own experiences with control of pain, chemotherapy, isolated limb perfusion, intralesional and topical chemotherapy, immunotherapy and radiotherapy. Very interesting discussions include those on melanoma in pregnancy and in children, and on occult primary tumors.

One of the strongest points of the book pertains to the detailed accounts of the authors' approach for informing patients and their families about the diagnosis of melanoma, and the subsequent relationships with them. Anyone engaged in medical practice will gain from this, and the patient handouts concerning the subject offer deep, meaningful insight that can be adapted for use by any melanoma or cancer unit anywhere.

The chapter on immunology and immunotherapy by Martin G. Lewis is also a most complete and up-to-date review, reflecting considerable clinical and research experience on the subject. Again, the figures and charts are somewhat confusing, but the discussion is clear and impartially presented. The final conclusions at the end of the chapter, concerning the state of the art pertaining to immunotherapy, appear very logical and offer some valuable guidelines to nonimmunologists managing melanoma.

The final chapter, on the care of the melanoma patient and of the dying, emphasizes a comprehensive, insightful and very humane approach to this very painful and sad disease. This chapter is recommended to all persons, medical and nonmedical, dealing with melanoma. In particular, the book has many sections that appear highly valuable for relatives of patients, and even for certain patients themselves.

Weaknesses of the book include a considerable amount of repetition, shortcomings of some clinical pictures and confusing tables. The authors did not significantly discuss acral lentiginous, genital, eye or amelanotic melanomas nor other variants such as spindle cell, desmoplastic or balloon cell melanomas.

The book is especially recommended for its discussions on occult primary melanomas, mechanisms of spontaneous regression, immunology, metastases, and for its warm, humanistic approach to the problem of melanoma. It is based on common sense and extensive experience, deserving of the highest recognition.

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